

Message Text

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IO-13 SSM-03 (ISO) W
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P R 171620Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6847
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE 339
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 0908

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI ASEC LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION FEBRUARY 10-16

REF: BEIRUT 0741 (DTG 101255Z FEB 78)

1. THIS IS THE REGULAR WEEKLY ROUND-UP. SEPARATE SITREPS
COVER IN DETAIL THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS AND THEIR AFTERMATH.

2. SUMMARY: THIS WEEK, A TENSE CEASEFIRE GENERALLY HELD
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IN THE WAKE OF THE INCIDENTS AROUND FAYYADIYAH BARRACKS ON
FEBRUARY 7. LIFE RETURNED TO MORE NORMAL LEVELS IN EAST
BEIRUT, ALTHOUGH SCHOOLS AND THE MAIN DAMASCUS ROAD IN
FRONT OF FAYYADIYAH BARRACKS REMAINED CLOSED. PRESIDENT
SARKIS SIGNED INTO LAW A BILL CREATING A SPECIAL
LEBANESE-ADF SECURITY COURT. FORMER PRESIDENT CAMILLE
CHAMOUN AND FORMER PRIME MINISTER SA'B SALAM MET

UNEXPECTEDLY. BOMBINGS AND OTHER VIOLENCE NOT NECESSARILY RELATED TO THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS CONTINUED ON A DAILY BASIS. THERE WAS MORE SHELLING IN SOUTH LEBANON. THE PLO APPEARED TO HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO TRY TO ENFORCE GREATER DISCIPLINE ON ITS MEMBERS IN SOUTH LEBANESE CITIES. THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORPORATION, AN AFFILIATE OF THE WORLD BANK, ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD HELP FINANCE A LOAN TO A LEBANESE TEXTILE COMPANY. END SUMMARY.

3. CHRONOLOGY: AFTERMATH OF FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS.

A. A TENSE CEASEFIRE HAS BEEN GENERALLY HOLDING IN THE WAKE OF THE INCIDENTS AROUND FAYYADIYAH BARRACKS ON FEBRUARY 7 (SEPTELS). FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS MET WITH PRESIDENT ASAD IN DAMASCUS ON FEBRUARY 9. THE CEASEFIRE WENT INTO EFFECT THAT EVENING, BUT WAS BROKEN ON FEBRUARY 10 WHEN THE SYRIANS RECEIVED SNIPER FIRE FROM AYN AR-RUMANNAH AND RESPONDED WITH SHELLING FOR ABOUT ONE HOUR.

B. ON FEBRUARY 11 SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM MET WITH GOVERNMENT AND CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN BEIRUT TO CONTINUE THE TALKS BEGUN IN DAMASCUS. ON FEBRUARY 13 THE SYRIANS GREATLY REDUCED THE NUMBER OF THEIR CHECK-POINTS IN WEST BEIRUT. THE MORNING OF THE FOLLOWING DAY ARMED NASSERIST MILITIA APPEARED ON THE STREETS IN WEST BEIRUT, BUT GENERALLY DISAPPEARED FROM VIEW SOON THEREAFTER. CONFIDENTIAL

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C. ON FEBRUARY 15 PRESIDENT SARKIS SIGNED INTO LAW A BILL PROVIDING FOR A SPECIAL LEBANESE-ADF SECURITY COURT TO DEAL WITH CRIMES AFFECTING THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE (ADF) IN LEBANON (SEE BELOW).

D. ALSO ON FEBRUARY 15, CHRISTIAN MILITIA IN FURN ASH SHUBBAK FIRED ON A SYRIAN JEEP KILLING TWO SOLDIERS AND WOUNDING ONE OTHER. THE SYRIANS ISSUED AN ULTIMATUM SAYING THEY WOULD RESUME SHELLING UNLESS THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE WERE PUNISHED. LEBANESE FRONT LEADERS MET ON FEBRUARY 16 WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS AND SYRIAN OFFICERS IN AN ATTEMPT TO DEFUSE THE SITUATION, AND AS OF THE MORNING OF FEBRUARY 17, THE SYRIANS HAD NOT RESUMED SHELLING.

4. SITUATION IN THE CITY.

DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD, LIFE IN WEST BEIRUT WAS GENERALLY NORMAL, ALTHOUGH FEWER PEOPLE WERE GOING OUT AT NIGHTS. IN ASHRAFIYAH, TRAFFIC PICKED UP THROUGHOUT THE WEEK, AND MOST SHOPS REOPENED. ALL SCHOOLS IN EAST BEIRUT

REMAINED CLOSED HOWEVER. IN AYN AR-RUMANNAH AND SHIYAH, TRAFFIC WAS LIGHT AND FEW SHOPS OPEN. ROADS BETWEEN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT WERE OPEN, ALTHOUGH TRAFFIC WAS LIGHTER THAN NORMAL. THE SECTION OF THE MAIN DAMASCUS ROAD IN FRONT OF FAYYADIYAH BARRACKS WAS CLOSED THROUGHOUT THE WEEK.

5. SPECIAL SECURITY COURT.

A. THE CABINET ON FEBRUARY 13 APPROVED A BILL CREATING A "SPECIAL SECURITY COURT" TO DEAL WITH "CRIMES AFFECTING THE INTEREST AND SAFETY OF THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE IN LEBANON." PARLIAMENT PASSED AN AMENDED VERSION OF THE BILL ON FEBRUARY 14 BY A VOTE OF 72 TO ONE, AND PRESIDENT SARKIS SIGNED IT INTO LAW ON FEBRUARY 15.
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B. THE LAW PROVIDES THAT: (A) THE COURT SHALL CONSIST OF A LEBANESE CHAIRMAN AND ONE OTHER LEBANESE MEMBER, AS WELL AS THREE MEMBERS FROM THE ADF; (B) AN INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF THREE LEBANESE AND TWO ADF OFFICERS SHALL REFER CASES TO THE COURT.

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C. IN AN IMPORTANT CONCESSION TO THE LEBANESE FRONT, THE BILL AS AMENDED CONTAINS A PROVISION IN EFFECT MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR A BOARD TO REVIEW SENTENCES AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARDON TO THE PRESIDENT. PRESIDENT SARKIS AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE SYRIANS APPOINTED THE MEMBERS OF THE COURT AND THE INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEES AND NAMED SYRIANS TO ALL THE ADF POSITIONS.

6. CHAMOUN AND SALAM MEET.

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A MAJOR BY-PRODUCT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION ON FEBRUARY 14 WAS A MEETING BETWEEN FORMER PRESIDENT CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND FORMER PRIME MINISTER SA'B SALAM, WHO HAVE NOT BEEN ON SPEAKING TERMS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE 1975-76 WAR. THE PRESS OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS HERALDED THIS MEETING AS A PRELUDE TO SERIOUS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. THE MEETING OCCURRED IN THE GARDEN OF THE MANSOUR PALACE WHILE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE WAS GOING ON. CHAMOUN TOLD THE PRESS AFTERWARDS THAT HE HAD NO QUARREL WITH SALAM, BECAUSE "WE ARE ALL WORKING FOR THE WELFARE OF THIS COUNTRY." CHAMOUN REMARKED TO REPORTERS THE FOLLOWING DAY THAT THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT "MUST BE REPLACED BY A POLITICAL GOVERNMENT AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME."

7. OTHER VIOLENCE.

VIOLENCE, NOT NECESSARILY RELATED TO THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS, CONTINUED ON A DAILY BASIS. DURING THE NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 11, FOR EXAMPLE, UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS MURDERED THE HEAD OF THE SYRIAN SOCIAL NATIONAL PARTY (SSNP) IN SHIMLAN, PHILIPPE HADDAD, AS WELL AS HIS WIFE AND THREE CHILDREN. ON FEBRUARY 14, TWO BOMBS EXPLODED IN DOWNTOWN BEIRUT, WOUNDING TWO PEOPLE. DURING THE WEEK A WAVE OF RUMORS ABOUT KIDNAPPINGS SWEEPED BEIRUT. THE RUMORS WERE APPARENTLY UNFOUNDED, HOWEVER, AND WERE FORMALLY DENIED BY THE ADF.

8. MORE FIGHTING IN SOUTH LEBANON.

A. SHELLING CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE WEEK IN SOUTH LEBANON AND WAS PARTICULARLY HEAVY ON FEBRUARY 11, 12 AND 13 IN THE MARJAYUN/KHIYAM AREAS. ACCORDING TO VSRIIOUS CONFIDENTIAL

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SOURCES, CHRISTIANS SHELLED THE PALESTINIAN-HELD VILLAGE OF NABATIYAH AND THE PALESTINIANS RESPONDED BY SHELLING CHRISTIAN VILLAGES IN THE AREA, INCLUDING KAFR RUMMAH AND AD DUWAYR. THE RADIO AND AFP REPORTED THAT ISRAELI PLANES OVERFLEW THE AREA ON FEBRUARY 13.

B. MEANWHILE, THE LEBANESE PRESS REPORTED THAT ISRAELI RADIO ON FEBRUARY 9 HAD INTERVIEWED MAJOR SA'ID HADDAD, THE CHRISTIAN COMMANDER IN SOUTH LEBANON. HADDAD SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO SEND REINFORCEMENTS TO HELP CHRISTIANS IN THE BEIRUT AREA IN THEIR FIGHTING WITH SYRIAN TROOPS, ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL PRESS.

9. PALESTINIANS IN SOUTHERN CITIES.

A. THE PLO APPEARS TO BE TAKING STEPS TO TRY TO ENFORCE GREATER DISCIPLINE ON ITS MEMBERS IN CITIES IN LIGHT OF THE JANUARY 27-28 INCIDENTS IN SIDON. THESE STEPS ARE IN PART THE RESULT OF PRESSURE FROM THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, WHICH HAS PUBLICLY CONDEMNED "MISTAKES" AND "EXCESSIVE PRACTICES" BY "UNDISCIPLINED ELEMENTS OF THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT."

B. THE LEFTIST DAILY AL LIWA ON FEBRUARY 9 PUBLISHED THE TEXT OF A CIRCULAR REPORTEDLY ISSUED BY PALESTINIAN LEADERS TO THEIR FORCES IN THE SOUTH. THE CIRCULAR INTER ALIA PROHIBITS GUERRILLAS IN CITIES IN THE SOUTH FROM WEARING MILITARY UNIFORMS WHEN THEY ARE OFF DUTY, FROM CARRYING WEAPONS UNLESS AUTHORIZED, AND FROM DRIVING MILITARY VEHICLES. IT ALSO SAYS THAT GUERRILLA OFFICES IN THE CITY MUST BE REDUCED TO A MINIMUM AND BE GUARDED BY PEOPLE IN CIVILIAN UNIFORMS FROM WITHIN.

C. THE RIGHTIST DAILY LE REVEIL REPORTED ON FEBRUARY 16 THAT ARMED PALESTINIANS HAD DISAPPEARED FROM THE STREETS
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OF TYRE AND BEEN REPLACED BY "POPULAR SECURITY FORCES."

10. LOAN FOR LEBANESE TEXTILE COMPANY.

THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORPORATION (IFC), AN
AFFILIATE OF THE WORLD BANK, ANNOUNCED ON FEBRUARY 13
THAT IT WOULD PARTICIPATE WITH FOUR PRIVATE BANKS IN
MAKING A \$1.8 MILLION LOAN TO LEBANESE TEXTILES S.A.L.
(LIBTEX). THE FUNDS WILL BE USED TO INCREASE SPINNING
CAPACITY AND EXPAND PRODUCT LINES, THE ANNOUNCEMENT SAID.
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